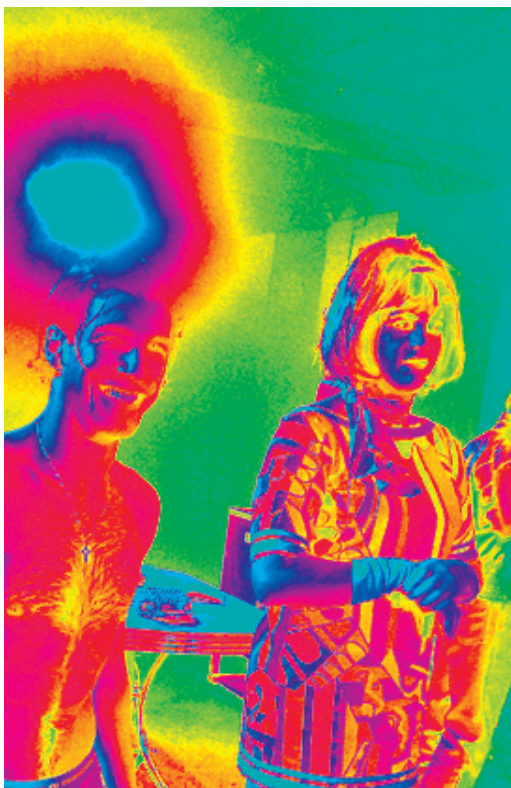




chelsea (from a to b and back again) | an original play by max sparber



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CHELSEA (FROM A TO B AND BACK AGAIN)

An original play by Max Sparber

ACT ONE, SCENE ONE:

(A hotel. A and B enter. A wears a camera.)

A: Late.

B: Early, if you must know.

A: How early?

B: Four ten, if you must know.

A: Now that I think about it, it didn't really matter if I knew or not. I won't be sleeping tonight anyway.

B: You took something at the party?

A: I have trouble with the pronunciation. Benzi—benzadro—benzedra ...

B: Benzedrine?

A: Yes?

B: Yes.

A: So I won't be sleeping. Just laying in bed, trying to count the rhythms of my heartbeat. They're quite hurried after these parties, don't you know, like a fast polka. One-two-three, one-two-three. It always throws me into a panic, because hearts shouldn't be beating in waltz time, should they?

B: Lay off the bennies,

A: You know I can't refuse a gift. This was from that movie star, the one who was in that new Rock Hudson movie?

B: The redhead?

A: No. Well, sort-of. A strawberry blonde. Buxom. Severe eyebrows. You know?

B: Yes.

A: With the pimples?

B: Yes.

A: She dragged me into the bathroom and produced pills. I was too shy to say no.

Anyway, I think it is the shyness that is causing my pounding heart anyway. Talking to strangers always makes me a little green about the gills. It's why I drag along gimmicks. Instead of talking to people, I prefer to hand them a prop and assign them little tasks.

B: I know.

A: Oh, am I boring you? You seemed to like my gimmick tonight.

B: Well, we'll see, once the film develops.

A: Yes we will. Do you think anybody actually snapped photos of their privates?

B: They were going in and out of the bedroom all night. Sometimes in groups. I suspect your party gimmick may have started a few new romances.

A: Or ended a few. There's nothing like taking a really close look at a floppy bit of flesh to make one swear off romance.

B: Well, perhaps the flesh is not so floppy.

A: Say, do you think? Won't that be a pop art statement! From the men, at least.

B: Women pop too.

A: They do?

B: Parts of them, at least.

A: The less I know about female anatomy, the happier I am. What you told me just disgusted me.

B: You're too easily disgusted. I swear, I could talk about the harvesting of wheat and you would start retching.

A: Does wheat go into food I eat?

B: Yes.

A: Then please don't tell me how it is harvested. Wait, I know what wheat is. Is it in bread?

B: Goodnight. You can count your heartbeats. I'm going to count sheep.

A: Oh, pooh. Won't you stay up with me? We can go up to the roof and watch the sun rise.

B: Really?

A: Well, no. I would hate that. I was trying to be impulsive, but I'm afraid I'm

rather bad at it. Really, I just want to sit in this lobby and smoke cigarettes and gossip.

B: I've already heard all the gossip. You need to make new friends.

A: I suppose I do. My old ones are starting to act bored with me.

B: You could go talk to that girl over there.

A: I don't know who you're talking about.

B: There.

A: Where?

B: Under the coat. On the bench.

A: That's a girl?

B: I'm willing to believe that you don't know what wheat is, but certainly you've seen a girl before.

A: You do need sleep — you're in a foul humor. Of course I know what a girl is. But are you sure that's not some abandoned clothes and wig?

B: Who would keep their wig in such a state?

A: A lunatic.

B: Well, then, perhaps it is a wig. But there is a girl under it. I'm going to my room. Go give her a shove. I'm sure she'll be delighted by your company. *(Exits. A crosses to the girl, leans over her, calling out.)*

A: Are you a girl? Say, are you a girl?

C: Hello?

A: Oh! You are!

C: Did you just wake me?

A: No.

C: You weren't just shouting?

A: No. Did you hear shouting?

C: Yes. I heard you shouting.

A: I sometimes have that dream too.

C: I know you. Oh! I recognize you!

A: Really?

C: Pop art!

A: Oh, that is me!

C: Did you wake me up to take my photograph?

A: Only if you're willing to take your pants off.

C: Then you did wake me.

A: Oh, no. There was somebody here, though. He looked a lot like me. He shouted at you and then ran off.

C: It's too bad.

A: Why?

C: Because I am willing to take my pants off. I suppose I could take them off for you, if the other fellow is gone.

A: Somewhere out there in the world, there is an adolescent boy who is dreaming of what you just said, and desperately wishing they were me.

C: Yes?

A: They would be disappointed, because I don't wish to see you with your pants off. But if I hand you this camera and turn my back, you can take a photo of any part of your body that you want to.

C: What if I want to take a photograph of my fingernails? Will you still need to turn your back?

A: Oh, gosh, yes. More than ever. Please don't discuss your fingernails around me.

C: Well, give me the camera. *(A does so.)* Now turn your back. *(A does so. The girl pulls down her pants and takes a photograph of her pubic hair. She pulls up her pants again.)* All right. You can turn around again.

A: You might be on the same roll of film as a woman who was in a Rock Hudson film.

C: What does she look like?

A: Strawberry blonde.

C: You'll know which one is me. I'm a brunette.

SCENE TWO:

(B enters. A is seated on the bench.)

B: You did not sleep at all last night.

A: How do you know?

B: Cigarette butts.

A: Say, there are quite a few. No, I took your advice.

B: You talked to the girl?

A: All night. I smoked and talked. It was just what I wanted. You slept well?

B: The sleep of the just. I don't know who my last night's sleep was meant for, but somehow I wound up with it.

A: You think you got somebody else's sleep by mistake?

B: Yes. It was magnificent. Usually I sleep badly. And I dreamed I was sewing gingham. I don't expect that this was a dream that was intended for me.

A: Perhaps your art is moving in a new direction. Textiles.

B: I also dreamed of ponies. I think I had the dreams of a 10-year-old girl in Iowa.

A: Do you think she got your dreams in exchange?

B: If she did, the therapy will be very expensive for her parents.

A: Well, it's expensive for your parents. I don't see why some Midwestern farm family can't chip in a little.

B: Give me one of those cigarettes, will you? Unless you have smoked them all.

A: I haven't. I have one left. I will split it with you, like they do in war movies.

B: *(Sitting, smoking.)* What did you talk about?

A: Fur. She's fond of sable.

B: And you?

A: Also fond of sable.

B: Sounds scintillating. I'm sorry I missed the conversation.

A: I don't know that you would have been welcome. I don't think either of us care for gingham.

B: You know, she could get into a lot of trouble sleeping in the entryway of a hotel.

A: I told her that.

B: And.

A: She agreed.

B: And.

A: She's sleeping in my room just now.

B: How did I know? The funny thing is, if she happened to have been a malnourished puppy ...

A: I would have thrown newspapers at her until she left the building, of course.

B: What if she had been a baby bird, having fallen out of the nest, who was dying on the sidewalk?

A: I would have hidden in my room and waited for you to tell me the bird was gone. But these are bad comparisons.

B: Why?

A: You can't talk about sable with a dying bird. What is on the agenda for today?

B: I was going to the studio and thought I would work for a bit. Why? Do you have another suggestion?

A: I was handed a particularly large check last night.

B: Oh! You sold something at the party!

A: Yes. One of my silkscreens.

B: You didn't mention it.

A: I forgot. I was in the kitchen, going through one of the cupboards, and our host surprised me. He caught me staring at his spices, and I was so flabbergasted that I didn't hear a word he said for the next thirty minutes.

B: Why were you going through his cupboard?

A: I have developed a curiosity about spice racks. We only had salt and pepper in my house when I was a boy, and I didn't like either of them. So I can't fathom

what somebody would do with paprika or ground nutmeg.

B: Your tedious childhood.

A: My tedious childhood. Yes. Anyway, I thought we might cash this check and go on a shopping spree. I understand it is what the very rich do.

B: We are not very rich.

A: Not far from it. Look at this check.

B: Say. I take it back. You are very nearly rich. This check is for one silkscreen?

A: I think so. Again, I didn't really catch what was being said. It is possible that I accidentally sold the man property in Florida, or some sort of automotive insurance. My head was swimming with embarrassment at having been caught peering at a tin of chili powder, and I just said yes to whatever the man asked and took his check. And now I wish to buy underwear.

B: Yes?

A: Tidy whites. I can't think of anything more extravagant. I think I will buy a hundred pair. And then I will go to a jeweler and purchase something made of gold. And I will treat all my friends to a very expensive dinner.

B: I will join you for the dinner, but I think I shall skip the shopping expedition. I'm not rich enough yet for the extravagances of tidy whites. And there is a painting I must complete.

A: Oh. Spoilsport. Well, name the most expensive restaurant you can. We will meet there at 6 p.m. Invite anybody you want. So where shall we eat?

B: Don Riggs.

A: I don't know where that is.

B: Walking distance.

A: Well, I am sure to get lost. Is it the sort of thing that I can climb into a cab and say "Don Riggs," and the cab will take me there?

B: Depends on the cab.

A: Meet me here at 6 p.m., won't you? I feel certain that any other plan will end with me wandering the alleys of Spanish Harlem, begging street toughs to point me in the direction of a fancy restaurant.

B: Oh, come now.

A: I do not wish to be murdered unless I am certain it will make the front page of

the *Times*. If I get killed by street toughs tonight, do you think it will make the front page?

B: No. My guess is there would be a paragraph in the Metro section.

A: Then I must insist you meet me here at 6 p.m. Say you will.

B: Of course I will. There is a free dinner in it for me. (*Rising.*) Well, this is where I came in.

A: Get some more cigarettes, would you? We'll smoke them tonight after the dinner.

(B nods, exits. Enter C. She plops down next to A.)

A: Oh, look who is up! If I were to offer to buy you one thing today, what would it be?

C: Caviar.

A: I was going to offer to buy you a sable coat, but caviar sounds equally good. Maybe I will buy both for you!

C: Okay.

A: Aren't you curious about what you will have to do to get these gifts?

C: No. Take my pants off?

A: No! There is more to life than pantslessness, and the sooner you learn that, the better.

C: What then?

A: You must help me find a jeweler.

SCENE THREE

(B sits, smoking. A and C enter, loaded up with shopping bags, C wearing a sable coat)

A: Late.

B: An hour. I sent all our friends to Don Riggs and told them to start ordering. By the time we arrive, they will already have eaten and drunk up your check.

A: Let me hurry upstairs and get rid of this stuff. Look. I bought a gold ring!

B: Why is it still in the box? Are you going to wear it?

A: Wouldn't that be tacky? Of course not! And look!

B: Tidy whites.

A: A hundred pair. Now I will never need to worry about getting hit by a car, because I will always have clean underwear!

C: What?

A: My mother used to stress that I always needed to wear clean underthings. "What if you get hit by a car?" she would ask. Give me those bags. (*A hurries upstairs. C crosses to B, plops down next to him.*)

B: New coat.

C: Yes.

B: Sable.

C: Yes.

B: It's quite becoming on you. Do you mind if I ask you something?

C: My life is an open book.

B: Why were you sleeping in the lobby here last night?

C: Do you really want to know? It's too brutal!

B: Now you absolutely must tell me.

C: Well, then I will, but I swear, it will make your skin crawl. I'm not from here, you know.

B: No? Where?

C: Sunny Los Angeles. I moved here with a businessman. He was 30 years older than me! But he was in love.

B: Were you in love as well?

C: I was just a girl. What does a girl know about love? I was so young. The young are so stupid.

B: When was this?

C: Two months ago. He broke off with his wife for me. Just broke it off. Left her, left the children, moved here to New York with just me and a suitcase full of Scotch bottles in tow. We stayed at the most expensive hotels, although we couldn't stay for very long. He claimed I was his niece. If the hotel detectives

found out otherwise, they would have arrested him. I was only 17 at the time. Too young for him.

B: Two months ago.

C: Yes.

B: And was he arrested?

C: Repeatedly. He wasn't very good at this sort of thing, and the Scotch made him foolish. And it made me noisy. After a few drinks, all I wanted to do was jump into the swimming pool in my underwear. There were terrible poolside scenes. Him trying to drag me from the water, the hotel detectives trying to drag him from the building. If I could go back in time and warn him that I was too young for such an adventure, I would.

B: If you could go back in time two months?

C: Yes.

B: What about now? What if the whole thing started over now?

C: Well, that would be different. I'm eighteen now. There would still be scenes, but they would be legal.

B: And what happened to him?

C: I don't know. I expect at some point he'll go back to his wife. I ran away every time he was arrested. They couldn't keep him, you know — not without an underage girl to show to the judge. The charges wouldn't stick. We had a place to meet. In front of a locker at the bus station. One day I didn't meet him.

B: Why not?

C: Well, such romances are for the young, but I was getting ready to turn eighteen, and figured it was time to light out on my own. I didn't want to spend my eighteenth birthday standing in the shallow end of a hotel swimming pool in my undergarments, watching this businessman being dragged away by his wrists and ankles.

B: No. I can imagine not. How did you spend your eighteenth birthday?

C: Shopping with your friend. And I understand we're having a big dinner tonight.

B: Ah. So the meeting that you were going to have with the 30-years-your-senior businessman — the one you were just talking about when you said "One day I didn't meet him" — that meeting was supposed to happen ...

C: Yesterday. I told you: It's too horrible to be imagined!

A: *(Coming downstairs.)* All right. Let's take a little walk and get a little dinner with our friends, like real celebrities do. *(To C.)* You must be particularly hungry. You didn't eat anything today but caviar and cauliflower.

C: It's all I ever eat.

SCENE FOUR:

(C enters, fists balled up, face smeared with blood, fuming. After a moment, B enters behind her, nursing a hand.)

B: Well. Walking home with you is certainly an adventure.

C: I wish you hadn't interrupted.

B: I wish I hadn't as well. I got a finger bent backward for my efforts.

C: I wasn't done hitting her.

B: Well, I apologize. I'm not very good at gauging these things. I stepped in because it looked like you were about to lose your scalp.

C: *(Touching head.)* She got a chunk of it.

B: I'm really quite confused, I must confess. The two of you seemed to be getting along famously. And then suddenly you were throwing her into a trashcan.

C: She made an impolite comment.

B: She did?

C: Yes. We went to the bathroom at the restaurant and while I was putting on my face, she told me that no amount of lipstick was going to make my ass any less fat.

B: Ah. Why didn't you hit her then?

C: I had not finished my caviar.

B: Well, I know a certain somebody who's going to be sore he missed your little scene.

C: He shouldn't have run off when dinner ended. He just started shouting "The studio, the studio," and fled the restaurant.

B: He panics if he doesn't put at least 40 hours in at the studio every week. He has an admirable work ethic. He would rather work than sleep.

C: *(Going to telephone.)* Well, bully for him. Do you have a dime I could have?

B: Yes. (*Gives her a dime.*) Who are you calling?

C: A friend.

B: I wasn't aware you knew anybody in this city.

C: Oh. It's a very dear old friend. His name is Mr. Whendidthisbecomeyourbusiness?

B: I see. My apologies. (*Starts to leave.*)

C: Wait. Will you sit down for a moment and have a smoke with me? I want to talk to you some more when I am finished with my phone call.

B: Well ...

C: Please. I didn't mean to be rude just then.

B: (*Looking at watch.*) It's late ...

C: Please.

B: Very well. But just for a short while.

C: (*Into phone.*) Hello! Did you just get in? I let your phone ring. I didn't know how long it would take you to get home. Well, I'm staying here for a while, I suppose. As long as he lets me. No, he doesn't seem to mind. Is that strange of him? Oh, I don't think so. I can't imagine it! I don't really feel like I'm his type, if you know what I mean! He says he doesn't mind. Apparently he has decided to give up sleep for a while. No, I have a spare key. I don't think he'll mind if you come by tomorrow. I mean, you were his friend first. I see. When are they coming over? Could you maybe all come over here? We'll make a day of it! Oh, any time. I'll just come down to the lobby at about noon, and everybody can come over after that. Have them bring their makeup kits — we'll make this a regular Max Factor party! Maybe we'll put him in a wig and makeup too! Wouldn't that be too much! All right. Tomorrow then. I am sure we're going to be best friends forever! (*Hangs up phone. Crosses to B, sits, takes cigarette from him. They smoke in silence for a while.*)

C: You may ask me again who that was, if you like. My life is an open book.

B: I have a queer suspicion I already know.

C: Oh yes?

B: For some reason, I think you were just punching her in the mouth a few blocks from here.

C: Oh, why bring up ancient history? I have already forgiven her for that. I swear: you brood about the past too much.

B: Oh? You feel you know me well enough to have decided that?

C: Yes. I have great intuition about people.

B: Well, I envy you. People are an endless source of mystery for me.

C: The future is passing by you, boyo. Do you remember that satellite that went up? What was it called?

B: What satellite?

C: The Russian one. Everybody got crazy about it.

B: Sputnik?

C: Sputnik! I was thirteen when the Russians put Sputnik up. How old were you?

B: Twenty-five.

C: So how old are you now?

B: Thirty.

C: How odd. I thought you were older.

B: Why are we talking about Sputnik?

C: Sputnik threw the headmistress of my school into an absolute panic. She interrupted classes and brought us all out onto the front lawn of the academy. She pointed to the sky and we all looked up at it, and she said, "Somewhere up there, the Russians are watching us." And as we stared at the sky, trying to imagine that the Russians were staring back down at us, my headmistress said "Forget about the past, ladies. The world changed today." And I couldn't imagine anything more exciting. All of a sudden, I was living in an adventure, like something out of a magazine.

B: Yes.

C: I was living in the future. You know?

B: Yes. I remember thinking the same thing.

C: And my headmistress was right. The past isn't worth remembering. I mean, we put a man in space this year, you know. Every day we get closer to a time when big metal robots work for us as butlers and we drive to the office in flying cars. I can feel the world changing every day, and I try to change a little bit with it. Can I ask you a question?

B: My life is an open book.

C: You're a queer, aren't you.

B: I have a friend who is. Can you guess his name?

C: I think I can. Is his name Mr. Whendidthisbecomeyourbusiness?

B: I bet you're surprised that I know him too.

C: You don't have to answer me. I only ask because I think the future belongs to faggots. I really do. I mean, not all of them. There are some who seem to be living 20 years in the past. You know who I am talking about? They spend all their time sitting in bars, quoting dialogue from old Bette Davis movies. Maybe you know what I am talking about.

B: I might.

C: I could never stand those sorts of faggots. My father was one. My mother never figured it out, even though he wore more perfume than she did. All of his friend were queers as well. They used to gather in our basement, eating tea cakes and smoking cigarettes out of long holders. They kept the basement door locked, but I could hear them down there, twittering and giggling. They seemed like a bunch of old ladies to me. But since I have come to New York, I have met a completely different sort of fag. There were a lot of them at dinner tonight, in fact.

B: You looked at our little dinner party and you saw the future?

C: Yes. Yes I did. I think in the future, we will be able to change who we are just by putting a different wig on. One wig, and poof, you're a man. Another and, poof, you're a lady. Another wig and, poof, you're a movie star.

B: Remind me to invest all my money in wigs.

C: You would be smart to.

B: I see what you mean about our party tonight, though.

C: Yes. They're already wearing the wigs.

B: And I'm not.

C: No. When somebody sits down to write the history of the future, and they get to this chapter, will you even be in it?

B: Who is going to write such a history?

C: Well, not me. I won't remember it. But somebody will, and I plan to be a character in it. When the history of the future is written, I want to be on every page. And you?

B: I suspect I will be lucky to be a footnote.

C: As I said, the future is passing by you, boyo.

B: I know. I can feel it.

SCENE FIVE:

(A enters. C is asleep, her head resting on B's shoulder.)

A: You have not slept.

B: No. She wanted to wait up for you. And she wanted company.

A: I could tell by the cigarette butts. You're not the only tabloid detective here.

B: These are mostly your cigarette butts.

A: Oh. You don't have any more cigarettes?

B: I have one. We could split it.

A: Like in a war movie. *(Sits. B hands him a half a cigarette.)* Aren't you going to ask me how work was?

B: Had I thought about it, I would have had slippers and a newspaper ready for you. So how was work?

A: I made 25 silkscreens. Can you imagine? I thought about that check that we spent today, and I thought, if I can get one check like that for every silkscreen, then maybe I should make as many silkscreens as possible. I even thought that I should hire some of the kids and put them to work producing silkscreens. It would be like an assembly line, but it would make art instead of automobiles.

B: And that art would, in turn, make money.

A: It's industry! Can you imagine anything more American?

B: I suppose I can't.

A: *(Glaring at C.)* Well, she didn't do much of a job staying up to wait for me. If we were a family, and you were the wife, and she were the daughter, I would be very disappointed. No pleasant greetings coming home from work, no slippers, no newspaper, and the girl's asleep. Why do I sweat and toil?

B: And she was in a fight tonight.

A: Really? She's a juvenile delinquent! Despite my best intentions, I have created a broken home! Well, at least there is one consolation.

B: What is that?

A: We can still sit and smoke and talk. It's my favorite part of the day.

B: A pity it won't last much longer.

A: What? Why do you say that?

B: Because I realized tonight that this is all I ever want. I like my life as it is. I like living in this tatty little residence hotel, and painting little illustrations for books of poetry, and eating in cafes. I'm not ambitious like you are. And I think that's why you picked me.

A: What do you mean?

B: I'm discreet. But lately I have been feeling too discreet. Nowadays, when we go to parties, I'm just another hanger-on, moping around somewhere in the background, hardly noticed. If people ask who I am, I'm just another friend. But your friends aren't like me anymore, are they? They're like her.

A: Like the girl?

B: Oh, God yes. These fascinating little monsters, half-criminal, half-superstar. I don't know where you find them, but lately they have been flocking to the city, and they always end up at your door. It's getting to the point where there doesn't seem to be a junkie or a hustler you don't know, as long as they know their way around a makeup kit. And that describes a lot of people in New York, but it doesn't describe me.

A: You're right. I can't resist them. I always thought if I started to make a name for myself, I would make certain all of my friends were movie stars. But instead they all are something else.

B: I always had terrible timing. You know, painting little portraits in watercolor? This is the time of ABC art, of fluxus, of your silkscreens. People want their art to be an adventure. I just wanted to paint things that I thought were beautiful. And I usually don't mind it, but my bad timing caused me to come into your life at just the wrong moment, and right now I find that I'm minding the hell out of it.

A: The wrong moment? In what way?

B: I came in at just the moment when you are starting to attract some attention. And I am talking about real attention — outside our rarified world of art dealers, and collectors, commissions for book covers, occasional commercial work. I'm looking at you now, and I can almost see you changing in front of me.

A: Yes?

- B: Yes. It's like you're ransacking your life and creating a little narrative of it. Your tedious childhood. Your life as a commercial artists, when you decided all you really wanted to do is make paintings of women's shoes. Your pop art statement. I hear you tell these stories now at parties, when you are passing out your little party favors and playing at being the shyest man in the room, and it has started to feel like a performance.
- A: I think this conversation has turned a little cruel.
- B: Oh? I don't think so. You were always obsessed with celebrities. Why would I be surprised if you have started to mimic their behavior? I don't mind it, except that I see you remaking yourself, and this new version that you are coming up with doesn't seem to include me. You always made fun of me for seeing a therapist, and I can see why. You've been taking all your little neurosis and turning them into gimmicks.
- A: Oh, come now.
- B: No, it's true. The way you have started to fetishize your lower-middle-class background, endlessly talking about American values and honest work ethics?
- A: Yes. That has become a big source of interest for me. But you make it sound dishonest.
- B: There does seem to be some dishonesty to it. You have been pretending for a while now that you are a completely asexual creature, you know?
- A: No. Now, you know that's not true.
- B: Can't you see it? The way you always pretend to be horrified by human biology? The way you behave as though touching somebody else is too awful to be imagined?
- A: Well, I do feel that way. I just exaggerate it, because I think that it's funny. I really think you're reading too much into this. Additionally, I am very tired, and more than that, I am very tired of this discussion. You are not usually one to throw around accusations, and I am very surprised by your behavior tonight. It has put me in a foul mood, and I do not appreciate that, because I was quite happy earlier. If you do not wish to share my happiness, I don't mind, but it seems particularly petty of you to steal it away from me.
- B: Well, that wasn't my intention ...
- A: No, I listened to you, and now you're going to listen to me. You're right. You did come into my life at a time of transition. But the story of my life is not some little tale I tell to amuse people at parties. I did have a tedious childhood. I did enjoy drawing shoes. I do have a pop statement to make, and it is one I feel very strongly about. I walk through a grocery store, and I look at the careful labeling that goes onto food, and the care with which the products are laid out, and sometimes I can't understand why people don't treat this like a museum. I go to

movies and read newspapers, just like everybody else, and everything I see and read seems so fascinating to me, and I don't understand why these celebrities and these stories aren't the subject of art. And so I make art about these things, and suddenly I discover that there are a lot of people who share my feelings. I'm not the only one who feels surrounded by beauty when shopping for tomatoes. I'm not the only one who sees Elizabeth Taylor on the movie screen and thinks that the artists of antiquity would have trailed behind her, paper and charcoal in hand. I am the artist that I want to be, and now that I am having success at it, I am starting to feel like I am turning into the person that I want to be. I cannot imagine anything more exciting and wonderful than what I am experiencing right now, and I am quite annoyed that you would describe it as dishonest.

B: I'm very sorry.

A: Well, you don't sound it, but you should be. I'm very tired just now. I have been experimenting with not sleeping, and I don't think that it has been a successful experiment. I am quite cross now, and I am quite sad, and I don't enjoy either of those emotions. I am going up to my room now, and, if you wish to continue this discussion after I have had a good night's rest, I would discourage you from doing so. Goodnight.

B: Would you like to say goodnight to the girl as well?

A: Kiss her on the cheek for me and tell her that her father loves her. Even though she's a juvenile delinquent. (*A exits.*)

B: (*Kisses the girl.*) Hasn't this been an exciting 24 hours? You're right, you know. I am going to be left behind.

C: (*Stirring, confused.*) Did you just wake me?

B: Just to say goodnight. Your father loves you, even though you are a juvenile delinquent.

C: What? You don't know my father.

B: I feel as though I do. I feel certain that one of these days I will be in a basement with him, with the doors locked, eating brownies and smoking cigarettes from a long holder.

C: Can you impersonate Bettie Davis?

B: No. But I'll get to work on it.

C: But what will things be like without you here?

B: Oh, you won't remember that I was ever here at all. Somebody will come along to replace me. I wonder who?

(*B rises and puts on a platinum wig. As the set changes, he changes into a shiny silver dress.*)

B: (To audience.) Whoever it is, he'll probably be another fascinating monster, half-criminal, half-superstar.

(A kitchen, all white. A 16mm movie camera sits on a tripod on one end. A sits in a chair behind the camera. B enters wearing high heels and a gold dress.)

A: Late!

B: Not as late as some, darling. Besides, I never agreed to live my life by your obsessive, arbitrary schedule. I just woke up 30 minutes ago. I don't think I have ever put on makeup so quickly.

A: *(Rising to look.)* Yes. You botched up the eyes. You look like a raccoon.

B: No, I intended that. I saw a group of PR girls going to their prom this weekend, and they all had their eyes done like this. Isn't it just too trashy for words?

A: I like it. You look like you've been crying.

B: Don't you have a kiss for your old girl?

(A glances around, then gives B a quick peck on the cheek.)

B: Better. Make a girl feel welcome. So where is the scenario?

A: I gave you one last week. I asked you to memorize it!

B: I'm not going to memorize it if I am going to be the only one, my angel. Give me a new copy. I'm going to stash it throughout the kitchen. That way, when somebody forgets their dialogue, they can just cross over — oh, here, say, and look at this calendar. But it won't be a calendar at all: it'll be a page of the scenario. They can just read their dialogue right off the calendar. What do you think?

A: Good. But won't it be obvious when somebody has forgotten what they are going to say?

B: Just tell them to sneeze to cover it. Besides, if you think my costar is going to say anything that resembles the written dialogue, you're deluded.

A: I know. She's terrible like that.

B: You know that she's got a fellow now that is claiming to be her manager?

A: Really? Who?

B: Some Princeton boy. He's taking her out every night and getting her drunk, and then they go back to his place and take drugs, and he talks to her the entire time. He tells her, "Dialogue is so old-fashioned. Just go in front of the camera

and say whatever you think of.” He tells her that people want to see honesty in movies, and written dialogue is dishonest. So she sleeps until noon, and then comes in and makes your movies, and claims she’s forgotten the dialogue. How do you like that?

A: I love it. It’s so rotten! She’s got a svengali already, giving her bad advice. I told you she was a superstar.

B: Darling, I’m a superstar. She’s a princess.

A: You don’t have a svengali.

B: Yes I do, you idiot. I have you. And what’s more impressive — a Princeton boy or a world-famous artist?

A: I don’t honestly know. I hear good things about Princeton.

B: Trust me, baby: Your advice is much worse than anything that Princeton boy could come up with.

A: I don’t give advice.

B: Exactly! You let me do whatever I want! A lady likes to feel she’s being looked after.

A: In fact, you’re the one who is always offering advice.

B: Even worse! Every decision I make is designed toward creating a memorable disaster.

A: I think you were the one who suggested I direct this film!

B: You see. I expect this afternoon will be legendary, and, better still, it will be caught on film. What’s this?

A: It’s a malt machine.

B: *(Turns it on. It makes a horrible noise. Turns it off.)* Noisy. That’s interesting.

(C enters, in a ratty sable coat, hands covering her ears.)

C: Ooh, that’s a terrible sound.

A: Late!

C: So buy me a watch, you stingy bastard!

A: I’m not your sugar daddy. Buy your own watch.

C: With what money! I am absolutely flat broke all the time. All I do is make your

movies, and I have to beg you to give me a few dollars for that.

B: Oh, don't listen to her. She's absolutely loaded.

C: Bullshit!

B: Oh, you know it's true, princess. You've got more money on you right now than the gross national product of most banana republics.

C: Don't call me princess, and I say bullshit.

B: Why don't you give me that beat up old sable coat, and we'll see what's stitched into the lining.

C: You know that's for emergencies only!

B: Now I say bullshit. You just don't like to spend money. You hoard it all away, hiding it around your hotel room or stuffing it into your coat. You're never happier than when somebody is buying you something that you can afford yourself.

C: I like to spend money! Oh, you're just cruel! I bought you drinks last week!

B: No you didn't. The Princeton boy paid for all the drinks.

C: But I offered to pay! That's the same thing!

B: *(To A.)* Do you see? A princess.

C: I told you not to call me that! I'll put my fist in your face! *(B starts the malt machine, and C covers her ears, screaming.)* STOP THAT NOISE! I HAVE A TERRIBLE HEADACHE! SHUT THAT GODDAMN STUPID FUCKING GODDAMN SHIT SHIT SHIT SHIT SHIT ... *(B turns the machine off.)* SHIT!

B: Potty mouth.

C: I'll pull your wig off.

B: If you do I'll cut you. See if I don't. *(To A.)* I think we're warmed up. Are you ready to start filming?

A: I'm about ready to slap myself for not having started filming already.

B: Oh, things are just getting started, my precious. I'm ready when you are.

A: All I need to do is push this button.

C: Wait. Where's the scenario?

A: You're supposed to have it memorized!

C: I tried! You know how bad I am with that!

B: Well, you'll just have to make do. Hit the button, angel.

A: And we're filming.

B: *(Into camera.)* "Kitchen." A short movie. Set: A white kitchen, belonging to our sound man. Props: One small kitchen table, two kitchen chairs, kitchen sink, malt machine, litter basket. One wall of the kitchen is in frame and a calendar is on that wall which is not actually a calendar but a copy of the scenario. Several articles are on the table and hidden between them is another copy of the scenario. There is also a large book on the table or two or three books and copies of the scenario are hidden in the books. When the actors forget their line *(Sneeze)*, they should pretend to be reading the books or can get up and go over to the calendar on the wall and read until they reach the place they want as if they were tearing off that date. *(Marches over to C, pushes her to the set.)* If you forget a line of dialogue, just sneeze.

C: I don't know any of my dialogue.

B: Sneeze a lot.

(C Falls in front of camera. She rises, embarrassed. She sneezes. She goes to the kitchen table, takes a mirror out of her purse and begins reapplying makeup. B crosses behind her, begins doing dishes. A grabs a camera and crosses around in front of the movie camera, takes a photo of C. She freezes, staring at him. He exits. She sneezes.)

B: *(Stage whisper.)* Litter basket.

C: What?

B: Litter basket!

C: I heard you! I just don't know what you mean by "Litter basket."

B: Rummage around in the goddamn thing!

(C goes to the litter basket, rummages through it. She produced folded up items of clothes, which she looks at, and then stares at A, bewildered.)

C: This litter basket is full of clothes. *(Sneezes.)*

B: Ever fuck a man in a shower, darling?

C: Once. A fellow named Mr. Nosybroadstheirfacesbloody.

B: I fucked a man in a shower this afternoon.

C: How nice.

- B: *(Crosses to C, puts his arms around her.)* I am thinking about the beach tonight, my darling. We could go together, in the dark, when nobody is around.
- C: Oh, no! *(B opens a book, places it in front of B, who sneezes. She looks down at the book, then reads out of it.)* You know how much the sand hurts.
- B: Well, we could shower afterward.
- C: *(Still reading.)* Oh, you naughty boy! If I was your mother, I would punish you for suggesting such a thing. *(Looks up, to A.)* This is terrible. This is really terrible.
- B: *(Steps in front of C, raises dress and lowers panties, exposing a bare ass.)* I do need to be punished. I am miserable without punishment.
- C: Honestly. Just terrible. This dialogue! *(B taps on the book, and C stares at it.)* Well, all right ... *(She crosses to a cupboard, rummages, producing a wooden spoon.)* Your mother never beat you like you needed. *(C paddles B's ass, very hard.)*
- B: *(Taken aback, pulling panties back up.)* Say! OUCH! That was pretty hard! That paddling hand is a little more practiced than I was expecting. *(To A.)* I have started to have suspicions about how she makes her money. *(C sneezes, crosses to calendar, tears page off. C brings it to B, hands it to her. B studies it for a moment, then reads.)* I threw out all that second-hand junk clothes, darling. Honestly, I don't know why you bring such refuse into the home. I slave over a hot desk all day; we can afford something a little nicer than Salvation Army military fatigues. *(B turns on malt machine, drowning out C.)* IT'S NOT LIKE WE'RE POOR, DARLING! WE'RE NOT LIKE THAT TRASH YOU CALL YOUR FRIENDS, WHO ALL SLEEP IN GUTTERS AND SPEND THEIR MONEY ON JUNK! WE CAN AFFORD BOTH THE JUNK AND THE NICE CLOTHES! LOOK AT YOU! YOU'RE ALWAYS SUCH A MESS! WHEN IS THE LAST TIME YOU HAD THAT SABLE COAT CLEANED! YOU LOOK LIKE SOMEBODY BATHED YOU IN GREASE AND THEN BEAT YOU WITH A CARPET WHISK!
- C: ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT ME?
- B: YOUR MAKEUP IS ALWAYS SO POORLY DONE! IT IS LIKE YOU CHOOSE MAKEUP THAT REFLECTS YOUR SELF-LOATHING! I THINK YOU JUST BEAT IT ONTO YOUR FACE WITH YOUR OWN FIST. *(C turns off malt machine.)* I UTTERLY DESPISE YOU! Oops. I utterly despise you.
- C: What were you saying above all that racket?
- A: *(Rising.)* Hold it. The first reel is out of film.
- C: Already?

A: I might have already filmed something on here. I don't know. The film was in the camera when I got it. Well, this will just have to be a two-reeler.

C: This is just terrible, you know. Just awful.

B: I think it is the perfect vehicle for you.

C: Is that some sort of joke?

B: No. I honestly think you look best on film when you have a blank, bewildered expression on your face. You're really beautiful then.

C: I don't know whether to thank you or slug you.

A: I'm going to take this into the bathroom and see if I can't figure out how to load a new cartridge into it. I was shown once. It's a purely technical maneuver. I think I can handle it. (*A exits with camera. B and C watch him go.*)

C: I've known him longer, you know.

B: I haven't got the faintest idea what you mean.

C: HIM! I've known him much longer than you — I knew him *before* he was famous! You try to act like you and he have something special together, but you're just jealous because he wants to make me a superstar.

B: Yes. I'm jealous. Every time I hear about another junkie that you've blown for a dollar, I just want to tear my own ears off from the sheer jealousy of it.

C: One day, in the distant future, when I'm living in a mansion in the sky, my robot butler will come to me and tell me that you're outside the door, begging enough money to buy a new wig. And I won't be petty when that day comes. I will give you the money. I'll hand it to you personally, just to see the look of gratification on your face.

B: I don't understand. If your mansion is in the sky, how will I get to it?

C: You'll take a jet shuttle. It will be like a bus, but with a big jet on the back.

B: Do you know, when you start to spin one of these little fantasies, I am never sure whether to encourage you or smack you and shout "Snap out of it."

C: Don't talk to me about fantasies. You like to act like you and he are *lovers*, but everybody knows he doesn't fuck anybody! Ever! Everybody knows he doesn't like to be touched!

B: Yes. Everybody knows that except me.

C: And even if you are lovers, it just means that you won't be around for much longer! I will still be making movies for him a hundred years from now, and

you'll just be another forgotten figure from his past.

B: Now, now.

C: I hope you ARE lovers! If you are, in two years nobody will even remember that you were ever around! Just like the others! I'll have completely forgotten you! People will say, wasn't there some platinum blonde drag queen who used to hang around here, and I will say, "I don't know what you're talking about." And I will ask if anybody remembers you, and nobody will.

B: ENOUGH!

C: Well it's true.

B: This is why I don't believe that you can't memorize dialogue. You obviously lay awake at night, concocting the most hateful thing you can possibly say, and then committing it to memory.

C: Well, you can't be a superstar and not be cruel.

B: Do you know that you and I agree on that. I suppose that's why we were put in this film together. To find out who is the bigger superstar. I have great wit and style, but you have a beautiful, blank, idiotic face, and I suppose if we turn the camera back on, one of us will murder the other in front of it. Won't that be a movie?

C: Don't threaten me. You've seen what I can do with a wooden paddle.

A: *(Returning.)* Got it! I must say I'm pretty delighted with myself! We can start filming again.

B: Go ahead and start the camera again. The fur is ready to fly.

C: I want my own copy of the script! I think some of that dialogue was not from the scenario!

B: What are you talking about? I never go off-text.

C: I swear I heard you say something about my sable coat.

A: There's a mimeograph of the script under the sink. There should be a few of them.

C: *(Crosses to sink, produced a mimeograph. Sniffs it.)* Mmm. Mimeograph. *(She sets the script on the table, reads from it.)*

A: I'm starting the camera now. Could somebody introduce the reel?

B: *(Stepping in front of the camera.)* Kitchen, reel two.

A: I want more sneezing in this reel. I like the sneezing. And don't move around as much. Okay?

B: Yes. More sneezing, less movement.

A: Turn on the malt machine. For continuity.

B: Okay. (*Turns on malt machine.*)

C: I THOUGHT SO! THERE'S NOTHING WRITTEN IN HERE ABOUT AN SABLE COAT!

B: I CAN'T HEAR A WORD YOU'RE SAYING, DEAR.

C: TURN OF THAT FUCKING MACHINE! TURN IT OFF! TURN IT OFF! TURN OFF THAT FUCKING FUCKING FUCKING (*B turns malt machine off.*) FUCKING!

B: Potty mouth!

C: There's nothing in here about a sable coat!

B: Who said there was? More sneezing, dear.

C: (*Sneezes, reads script.*) Do you want coffee?

B: Yes.

C: How do you take it?

B: Like my men.

C: Black?

B: Up the ass.

C: Aha! That was OFF TEXT!

B: No it wasn't. Look: "Improvise around written dialogue." That was an improvised line.

C: I think it was a poor one. (*Turning on stove.*) Do we even have a coffeepot? And the scenario calls for cake! Is it possible to have any of our props ... (*B places a coffee pot in front of C.*) Oh. (*Sneezes.*)

B: Just say your last line again, dear.

C: Do you want coffee?

B: No.

C: Well, I'm making coffee, so YOU'RE GOING TO DRINK THE FUCKING STUFF! How will you take it?

B: Can I have it spilt all over your face?

C: No. *(Sneezes.)*

B: Ask me if I want cake.

C: Do you want cake?

B: Is it layer cake?

C: HOW THE FUCK DO I KNOW? I HAVEN'T SEEN THE CAKE!

B: Look in the cabinet above the stove.

C: Why?

B: According to the scenario, it's in the cabinet above the stove.

C: *(Looks. There is cake there.)* It's layer cake.

B: Just like my life. One miserable layer after the other.

C: *(Sneezes. B lifts the cake. There are pages of the scenario under it. C reads.)* That's just it. I don't have a layer of my own. Do you know that I hate this dialogue.

B: Now you've gone off text! *(To A.)* This dialogue really is atrocious. Do you mind if I just do a monologue? You do? You don't? Just throw something at me when you want me to stop.

C: Can I throw something at you?

B: Yes. If you want me to stop, tear open the lining of your sable coat and throw hundred dollar bills at me.

C: There you go with the sable again.

B: I know about your Princeton boy, by the way.

C: Oh, is this to be the monologue?

B: But what does he know about you, I wonder. Does he know where your money comes from? Does he know the awful, dirty things men put in you in darkened doorways?

C: All right, NONE OF THIS IS IN THE SCRIPT.

B: Does he know about your businessmen. The ones who think they love you. Does he know that you spend half your life in expensive hotels, drinking Scotch with old men who wear sack suits and garters for their socks? Or does he think he's your one and only.

C: Will somebody please turn on the malt machine?

B: It's probably easy for you. You were always a little rich girl, and always got presents from your daddy's friends. The hundred dollar bills they hand you probably just sees like another gift. Do you even realize that it is payment?

C: Fuck you! I'm turning on the malt machine! *(Turns on malt machine.)*

B: YOU'RE A SUPERSTAR ALL RIGHT! YOU'RE A WHORE SUPERSTAR! A WHORE SUPERSTAR!

C: I CAN'T HEAR YOU!

B: *(Crosses to C, shouting at her.)* WHORE SUPERSTAR! CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW! WHORE SUPERSTAR!

C: *(Turns off malt machine, fuming.)* Oh, I hear you all right.

B: And your sable coat isn't the right cut for you. I can still see your fat ass.

C: Oh, that's IT! *(C smacks B, then snatches her wig.)* Well, without your wig, you're just another boring fag, aren't you?

B: I warned you about my wig. *(Seizes knife from kitchen drawer.)*

C: *(Throwing hands over face.)* Don't cut me! *(B Tosses knife down, seizes C's hand, presses it onto stovetop.)* OUCH! You're BURNING MY HAND!

B: Remember this the next time you reach for my wig, you retarded princess bitch.

A: Hey!

B: *(Releases C's hand.)* Oh, sorry. That *was* off-text.

C: Oh, God, look at my hand! OW! OW!

A: *(Crosses to C, looks at her hand.)* Oh, that's not so bad. It's just a little red.

C: It HURTS.

A: We'll go to the refrigerator and put some butter on it. It will be all better.

B: I hear that the best thing for a burn is to pour salt on it.

C: YOU SHUT UP! Hand burner!

B: Whore superstar.

C: At least I am a superstar.

B: Oh, I think we know the truth.

C: What truth? *(Beat.)* What truth?

B: Who will kill who if the camera keeps rolling. You might want to turn that thing off, angel.

A: *(Crossing to camera.)* It's off. The reel ran out of film.

B: Well, it should be a marvelous addition to your collection.

C: I don't want anybody to see this film.

A: What was that?

C: I DON'T WANT ANYBODY TO SEE THIS FILM. *(Storms over to camera, opens it, exposing film. She yanks the film out with her burned hand.)* OW ow ow!

B: Oh, what a pity. I don't think we're going to do better than that.

C: You shut up! I am going to go home and get into bed, and forget that this happened. I am already forgetting it.

B: I bet that's true. You have the memory of a gnat.

C: And when you're gone, I will forget you too. *(Storms out.)*

B: THEN THE NEXT TIME, I SHALL HAVE TO LEAVE A SCAR! *(To A.)* What are you looking at?

A: I've never seen you without your wig before.

B: Disappointed?

A: I had not even imagined what you look like without it. *(Picking up film.)* Well, that was really more excitement than I wanted from this film. I asked you not to move around so much, and you moved around more in the second reel. And I don't think you sneezed at all.

B: Sorry.

A: Even if she hadn't pulled the film out of the camera, I would have wanted to reshoot it.

B: I don't think I can appear on camera with that girl again.

A: That's okay. You won't be in the next one. This was really meant as a vehicle for the girl.

B: Oh. (*Slumps into a chair.*) Do you have a cigarette? (*A hands B cigarette.*) You know, she's never actually going to be a superstar.

A: Why would you say that?

B: Because any attention that she gets is just reflected off you. You're the only real superstar of all of us.

A: Oh, come now. I'm just a working stiff, putting in my 40-hour workweek in order to bring home the bread for the children.

B: I can't figure you out. You just sat there during that whole scene and watched, didn't you?

A: Well, I wasn't really part of the movie, except for taking that photograph in the beginning ...

B: Strange. What were you thinking when I started fighting with that girl?

A: I was thinking that this was starting to look too much like a real film. You know — there was a plot developing. I want events in my movies, yes, but no plots.

B: Strange. I wish that I had known you two years ago.

A: Why do you say that?

B: Wasn't that when the girl met you? Two years ago? She lords that fact over me.

A: So?

B: I wonder if you were different then. You weren't really famous two years ago, were you? Not like you are now. You know — you wouldn't walk into a room and everybody would recognize you, and they spend the entire night trying to get your attention, and even when they are not talking to you, their bodies are tilted slightly toward you. You weren't the sun two years ago, that everybody revolves around.

A: Oh, you exaggerate.

B: No. No I don't.

A: Well, I don't think I was any different two years ago.

B: It doesn't seem possible that you were always this disconnected. I like to imagine that there was a time when you talked a lot more. When you were capable of getting excited by things. For some reason, I feel like I would see some of that, if

I were to see you two years ago.

A: Well, I can assure you that I was the same person two years ago that I am now.

B: Did you have a lover back then?

A: Why are you asking me this?

B: I never hear about your old lovers. I'm curious. You don't have to answer if you don't want to. But there was a lover, wasn't there? The girl sometimes hints about it.

A: I had a friend, yes. He played a horrible trick on me, and I don't like to talk about him.

B: What was the trick?

A: We had a little fight. The next day, there was a note taped to my door asking me to meet him at a locker in the bus station. Of course, I had never been to the bus station, and got horribly lost looking for it, and the whole experience was just a nightmare. And when I got there, he wasn't there at all. He brought me all the way there for nothing. And I never saw him again.

B: Did you love him?

A: I don't really wish to talk about this, if you don't mind.

B: What do you feel about me? (*Beat.*) Oh, you don't have to answer. I know that when I talk about us in public, you just nod, or you sit and stare with that impassive look you have. You always behave like you can't be touched, and I think everybody believes that I am just lying about having you as my lover. I sometimes wonder if that's why you didn't pick me in the first place — because whatever I say about our relationship, nobody will ever believe me. Do you know, I never hear anybody talk about this friend that you had two years ago.

A: Nobody really knew him. He was a pretty quiet fellow. We used to go to parties together, and people wouldn't even really notice that he was there. I haven't really thought about him in quite some time.

B: What did you do when you found out that he left you alone at the bus station?

A: Well, I just wept with frustration. It was very embarrassing. I would not like to have that experience now. Can you just see the headlines? Back then, if I had a little tantrum at a bus station, nobody cared.

B: So you have changed a little in the past two years.

A: Yes, I suppose that's true. Nowadays, I would send somebody else to the bus station for me.

B: I want you to know something. I will never ask you to meet me at the bus station. When it ends between us, I won't make a fuss. I'll just go back to doing what I used to do, running little errands around your studio. I'll just slip back into being another goddamn drag queen that lingers around your office. I'll reserve my feistiness for something else. You'd appreciate that, wouldn't you?

A: Yes I would.

B: I don't want to just disappear, you know. I don't want to be like that fellow from two years ago, who nobody really remembers and nobody ever talks about.

A: Well, that's not likely to happen.

B: Why do you say that?

A: I've got you on film. You're in one of the earliest movies I ever made. Do you remember?

B: Of course I remember. Your screen tests. It's when I first realized what a sadist you are.

A: A sadist! Why do you say that?

B: You set appointments with all of your friends. You sat them opposite a movie camera and told them to do absolutely nothing for two minutes.

A: So?

B: None of your friends could stand that! I remember sitting opposite the camera, staring at you, feeling like the whole point of this exercise was to annihilate my personality. Do you remember what happened?

A: No.

B: I burst into tears. I spent most of the two minutes weeping.

A: Oh, I do remember that. I was very upset by that. I was upset by all my friends. I wanted them to do nothing, and they all insisted on doing something. The girl spent all two minutes glaring at me. Glaring! I wanted her to do nothing. She does nothing so beautifully.

B: You would do something too, if you were on the other end of the camera.

A: No I wouldn't. I would do nothing at all.

B: Well, we can test that right now. We have a camera right here.

A: It doesn't have any film in it.

B: We will pretence it does. (*Picks up camera, crosses to A, sets camera up before him.*)

I'm going to test you on this. I'm going to point this camera at you for two minutes, and I don't want you to do anything at all.

A: Okay. How will you know when two minutes are up?

B: I'll guess. Are you ready to begin?

A: Yes. I'm quite excited, really.

B: Begin. (*Two minutes pass, or thereabouts. A does nothing.*) That seemed like about two minutes.

A: I feel like I did too much.

B: You did nothing.

A: I wish we had actually filmed that! We will have to do it again, but with film in the camera. I am sure that I can do less.

B: You did nothing. YOU DID NOTHING AT ALL. Don't argue with me.

A: I feel sure that my nose twitched....

B: NOTHING AT ALL. You were blanker and more idiotic than that girl.

A: You just flatter me now.

B: I don't know what to say. I knew you were strange, but this takes the cake.

A: Is it a layer cake?

B: I'm not getting though to you, am I? I'm not making it clear how strange this is. Two minutes — NOTHING. I thought you were just a pretender, you know? That when you go out in public, and you are disconnected, and you don't like to talk to people, and you don't like to be touched, I thought you were pretending.

A: Oh?

B: Like it was some sort of artistic statement. But it's not an artistic statement at all, is it. You really are a weirdo.

A: Well ...

B: Yes?

A: You know how it is.

B: What?

A: You can't be a superstar and not be strange.